

SEDAR Steering Committee
Final Meeting Summary
February 8, 2010

This meeting convened via conference call. The following members attended: Steve Bortone, Bob Shipp, Miguel Rolon, Eugenio Pineiro, Bob Mahood, Duane Harris, Roy Crabtree, Karyl Brewster-Geisz, and Bonnie Ponwith. Others attending included: John Carmichael, Dale Theiling, Patrick Campfield, Rick Leard, Tina O'Hern, and Graciela Garcia-Moliner.

1. Schedule changes for 2010

The Committee recommended that the planned update of South Atlantic red snapper be conducted as a benchmark, and that the process be expedited for presentation to the Council in December 2010. The benchmark process is the more appropriate approach for this assessment, as it will allow thorough consideration of numerous red snapper assessment issues raised by the South Atlantic Council in December 2009. Conducting a benchmark assessment will allow the workshop panels greater flexibility to incorporate new research and data sources and to reconsider key assessment assumptions in light of current information. Moreover, the benchmark process includes an independent peer review, which will help ensure that the methods and results are valid and robust, and offers increased opportunity for public input.

The Committee supported the FL FWCC offer to conduct a benchmark of Goliath Grouper and update of spiny lobster during 2010. The Gulf and South Atlantic Councils will discuss the joint review process for the Goliath benchmark and spiny lobster update at their next meetings and report to the May Steering Committee on a recommended process for reviewing those assessments. Consideration of joint review by a subset of each SSC is expected.

The Committee supported an analytical team proposal to consider additional Gulf of Mexico tilefish stocks during SEDAR 22.

The Committee supported delaying the planned update of South Atlantic snowy grouper so that the red snapper benchmark can be completed by December 2010.

The Committee agreed that other scheduling issues will be settled at the next meeting in May 2010, allowing time between now and then for issues to be discussed by each council.

An updated 2010-2015 work plan reflecting the above changes will be appended to this summary.

2. Progress and comments on procedure changes beginning in 2010

Consistency in methods and treatment of uncertainties remains an issue to be addressed through future SEDARs and procedures workshop. Issues of particular concern include selectivity patterns, discard mortality rates, and treatment of historical data series. It was recommended that panelists be instructed to consider decisions pertaining to similar stocks and similar areas when addressing key uncertainties, and that consideration be given to developing a Term of Reference to ensure this concern is addressed.

The Committee also discussed presentation of assessment results as ranges rather than point values, as a possible avenue to better reflect uncertainty. Current procedures allow development of ranges, but there is a widespread perception that the management process requires point values for many key outputs, such as current and reference estimates of exploitation and biomass. The Committee agreed to discuss this issue further at its next meeting.

The Committee supported further consideration of the role of CIE reviewers in SEDAR updates, and directed staff to work with Chair Ponwith to evaluate feasibility and procedures and report at the next meeting.

The Committee agreed that a written CIE review is desired during the pre-review comment period, and that additional CIE observation of the AW webinar process is not required. However, a CIE reviewer assigned to conduct a written review during the pre-review period may attend webinars which are open to the public; such attendance would be available but neither required nor requested in the Scope of Work for the reviewer.

Considerable discussion ensued regarding proposed changes to the review panel process. Of primary concern are costs and time issues related to convening entire SSCs to observe the assessment peer review, especially given desires to increase SSC involvement in the data and assessment workshop stages. Therefore, the Committee recommended maintaining the existing process by which review panels meet in a dedicated workshop that is administered through SEDAR. Several changes are recommended to improve the review process:

- SSC involvement on the review panel will be increased, with Councils allowed to appoint up to 3 SSC members who will be supported by SEDAR.
- Review panel chairs will serve solely as facilitators and as reviewers.
- Review panel chairs will be chosen by the Council from among their SSC membership.
- SSCs should be asked to indicate which members are best suited as ‘reviewers’ and which as best suited as ‘facilitators’ to assist the Council in making appropriate appointments.
- Review panels will be reduced to 3-4 days depending on the number of stock, as implementation of the pre-review is expected to reduce the issues brought before the review panel.

An alternative approach will be considered in May to address HMS assessments as there is no HMS SSC.

SSCs will not be instructed to re-review assessments brought to them through a SEDAR peer review workshop. Instead, SSCs should be instructed to proceed with developing fishing recommendations based on the information provided through the SEDAR workshop and independent peer review process. SSCs should be provided copies of the draft assessment during the pre-review comment period so that they may submit issues for consideration and provide guidance to their review panel representatives.

The Committee did not resolve whether the additional SSC appointments to the review panel will be supported by SEDAR or by the Councils. Staff was instructed to develop budget options and associated costs for further discussion, either at the May meeting or sooner if possible.

3. Conflicts of interest

The Committee agrees that there is a need to carefully consider potential conflicts of interest and will discuss this issue in detail at the next meeting.

4. Procedural Workshops Update

The Committee discussed the feasibility of holding the proposed Historic Catch Procedures Workshop in 2010. Members agreed that the topic is important and should be addressed, but recent assessment project additions and expedited schedules for planned projects will consume all available resources for CY 2010. Of particular concern with regard to overall workload are the elevation of Atlantic red snapper to a benchmark, and the acceleration of Atlantic red snapper, Goliath grouper, and spiny lobster to December completions. Therefore, the Committee agreed that this workshop should be postponed and considered a candidate for 2011 if funding is available. Top priorities for future procedural workshops remain historic catch estimates and natural mortality, with discard mortality emerging as another area of concern.

5. Budget Update

The draft budget was still under development at the time of the meeting and not available for discussion by the Committee. Councils were directed to consider several budget-related issues at their next scheduled meeting and develop recommendations for consideration at the May 2010 Steering Committee Meeting.

One of the key issues raised is the role of SEDAR in supporting Council Member involvement in SEDAR workshops. Committee members agree that the process and the Councils benefit from Member attendance at workshops, but expected costs for Council Member travel and stipends increase considerably in 2010 due to the many ongoing SEDAR projects. While the switch to webinar-based assessment workshops saves considerable travel expenses and allows an increase in overall productivity, Member stipend expenses are still incurred and reduce the overall costs savings anticipated by the webinar approach. One possible approach that will balance the 2010 budget and provide support for additional SSC representation at review workshops is for the Councils to provide travel and stipend support for Council Members attending SEDAR workshops.

The Councils are asked to consider the following questions:

- Support for up to 3 SSC appointees at the review panel provided by SEDAR or the Councils?
- Travel and stipend expenses for Council Members attending SEDAR workshops provided through SEDAR or the Councils?

SEDAR Work Plan, 2/9/2010						
Group	Beaufort	Miami			Others	Procedures
Team (Stocks)	SAFMC	GMFMC	CFMC	Shark		
2009 (6)	SEDAR 19 black grouper red grouper	Updates gag red grouper red snapper	Ongoing Data Review, Monitoring Plan development, Data-poor methods development. With CFMC and SSC.		SEDAR 18 ASMFC red drum	Caribbean Data Catchability
2010 (14)	SEDAR 24 red snapper + Update black sea bass	SEDAR 22 yellowedge tilefish (3 units) + Updates Greater Amberjack		SEDAR 21 Sandbar dusky blacknose	SEDAR 20 Review ATL Menhaden Update FWC Spiny Lobster SEDAR 23 FWC: Goliath Grouper	Uncertainty (2/2010) Historic Data (2011) Natural Mortality? Discard Mortality?
2011 (7)	SEDAR 25 TBD May 2010	Updates vermillion gray trigger			SEDAR 26 Review Gulf Menhaden SEDAR 27 FWC: Yellowtail Snapper	
2012 (9+)	Updates red porgy vermillion Greater Amberjack SA Spanish Mackerel	SEDAR 28 CMP stocks (Cobia, Little Tunny, cero, Gulf Spanish) + Update King Mackerel		SEDAR 29 TBD		
2013 (7)	SEDAR 30 White Grunt Scamp Wreckfish	Updates Red Snapper (?) Gag red grouper			SEDAR 31 FL FWC: Hogfish (Tentative)	
2014 (4+)	Updates black grouper red grouper red snapper ??	SEDAR 32 Red Snapper ? Others?		SEDAR 33 TBD		
2015 (8)	SEDAR 34 Dolphin Wahoo Golden Crab	Updates yellowedge grouper tilefish (3) Greater Amberjack				